The Minister of the Environment's
Task Force
On Litter Abatement

DISCUSSION/ISSUES PAPER

The Clean
Nova Scotia
Foundation

May, 1988

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Introduction

On March 1, 1988, the Nova Scotia Minister of the Environment announced his intention to form a task force to examine litter problems in order to maintain a good quality of life for Nova Scotians and to preserve the aesthetic values of the Province. The Task Force would report back to the Minister with an action plan with recommendations to deal with the problem.

The Minister advised Members of The House on April 5, 1988 that a Task Force had been set up and would be studying litter abatement programmes on legislation with particular emphasis on recycling in Nova Scotia. The Task Force will travel the Province inviting both oral and written submissions from interested persons, corporate bodies, governments, and non-profit agencies.

The Chairman for the Task Force is Dorothy Grant of Halifax. Other Members are: Charles Baxter, Rod McLeod and Vera Stone of Halifax; Barrie MacFarlane and Brian Scott of Dartmouth; Heather

MacInnis of Breton Cove, Victoria County; Maureen Woodlock from Kingston; and Sylvester LeBlanc of Reserve Mines. Collectively, the group represent industry, wildlife and forestry interests, community recycling operations, municipal government, volunteer groups, and concerned Nova Scotians. Secretarial services to the Task Force will be provided through John Thorpe, the Executive Director for The Clean Nova Scotia Foundation.

The Task Force results from initiative taken by The Clean Nova Scotia Foundation. Earlier this year, The Minister of the Environment requested The Foundation's opinion on amendments to the Province's Beverage Container Act. (copy attached). This Act, written over a decade ago, no longer effectively addresses the dramatic changes that have taken place in the packaging industry and, in particular, in the marketing role that containers now play. For instance, it was only in 1979 when the first drive-through facility opened in a national fast food chain in Nova Scotia. That alone placed a more weighty responsibility on consumers for correct disposal of wrappings and containers.

The so-called disposable containers that often appear as litter on our roadsides, have also changed

in the past few years. Many are manufactured from composites and non-degradable plastics with chemical formulas that remain a mystery to the public. Beverages and convenience foods are consumed from a myriad of containers that were impossible to envision by the writers of The Act. Rather than just dealing with the bottles and cans of the soft drink industry, The Foundation recognized the opportunities that a task force could bring to developing a new Act that would address the disposal problems presented by convenience containers in general.

Existing Litter Legislation

At present, in Nova Scotia, anti litter legislation exists at the municipal level and provincially in several forms in different acts. Section 56 of the Motor Vehicles Act states:

"156 (1) No person shall throw any object at a motor vehicle or at a person in a motor vehicle on or (or on) a highway which may cause injury to such vehicle (vehicle) or to any person therein.

(2) No person shall throw, deposit, or knowingly leave on a highway any glass, nails, tacks, scraps of metal, or other materials that are liable to injure tires of motor vehicles.

(3) No person shall throw or otherwise deposit from any vehicle on the highway any litter, refuse, garbage, rubbish or other matter."

The Motor Vehicles Act provides for a minimum penalty as follows:

"264 Any person who violates any of the provisions of Section 56, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable for the first offence to a penalty of not less than fifty dollars and in default of payment, to imprisonment for a term not less than seven days; for the second offence to a penalty of not less than one hundred dollars and in default of payment, to imprisonment for a term not less than fourteen days; and for the third or any subsequent offence to a penalty of not less than two hundred and fifty dollars and in default of payment, to imprisonment for a term not less than thirty days."

Section 42 of the Provinces Public Highways Act reads as follows:

"(1) No person shall

(a) deposit any sewage, refuse, garbage or other matter on any highway or in any drain, gutter sluice or watercourse on any highway; or

(b) cause, suffer or permit any sewage, refuse, garbage, rubbish or othermatter to discharge or flow upon any highway or into nay drain, gutter, sluice or watercourse on any highway.

(2) Every person who violates this Section is liable to a penalty of not more than fifty dollars and in default of payment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fifteen days, and in addition to such penalty is liable for the expense of removing such sewage, refuse or other matter of preventing such discharge or flow."

Of the sixty-six Municipal Units in Nova Scotia, twenty have specific litter by-laws. All but eight of the remainer have waste, refuse, garbage or health and sanitation by-laws which make some

reference to the handling of the area's waste. The most common phrase used is as follows: "No person shall throw any dirt, filth, or rubbish on any street road, lane or highway in the town." This may include a reference to areas of land (ditch, cemetary ground, playground, etc.) The possible maximum penalties range from $1000 or ninety days, to $50 or seven days. Several municipal units include a "no spilling" clause to prohibit debris falling from vehicles.

Definition of Litter

For the purpose of this Task Force, the following is suggested as a simplified definition of litter:

"Litter is any discarded manufactured or organic material not placed in a proper receptacle".

ISSUES

A large portion of litter evident in Nova Scotia is made up of various forms of convenience packaging and containers. Many of these items have an intrinsic value and through controlled disposal and collection, could be processed and remanufactured into new products (Recycling). Waste reduction through recycling and the attitudinal requirements to curtail littering, are of similar disciplines.

The Minister of the Environment strongly supports the concept of the reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste. He has requested that this Task Force make specific recommendations for major recycling initiatives in the Province of Nova Scotia. The major issue areas for consideration, therefore, are **litter abatement** and **recycling.**

Submissions

The Task Force challenges interested persons to present their views, solutions, and recommendations on Litter Abatement and the promotion of Recycling in Nova Scotia.

To assist you with gathering your thoughts in making a submission, you may be guided by the following questions:

- **What is your perception of the situation?**

- **How does the present situation affect you in your neighbourhood (home/work)?**

- **Who do you believe is responsible? (for the situation and/or solution).**

- **What ways do you propose to rectify the situation?**

You may wish to include in your submission ideas regarding the supportive legislation, codes and guidelines, education programmes, organizational structure, and related costs/revenues.

The Task Force on Litter Abatement requests submissions either written or in a verbal form. Should you wish to discuss your thoughts with Task Force members, they will be attending public forums in all regions of the province starting in late June, 1988. The deadline for making appointments to deliver oral presentations is June 16, 1988.

Written submissions have to be received no later than July 29, 1988. Individuals are welcome to make both oral and written submissions.

Submissions and requests for appointments should be made to:

The Minister's Task Force on Litter Abatement
The Clean Nova Scotia Foundation
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